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OL. XV

The MINISTER'S QUARTERLY

SPRING 1959

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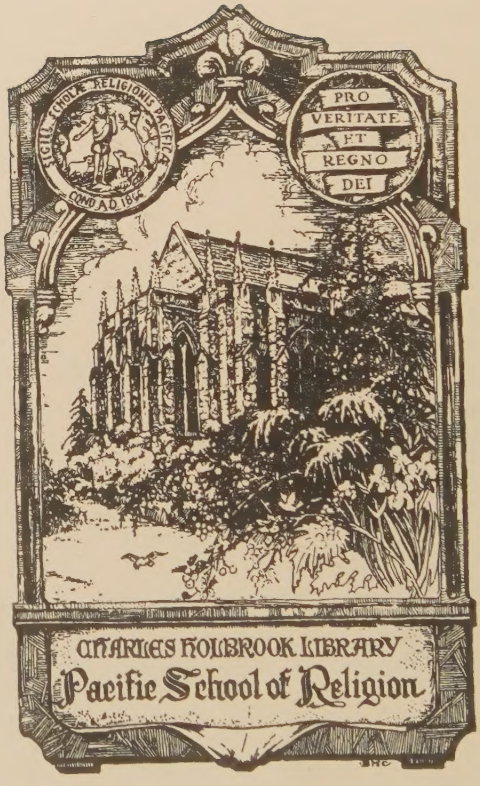

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THE MI[illegible]LY

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the editor's page

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Thanks and "Well Done!"

William Coolidge Hart put fifteen issues of the Minister's Quarterly to bed as its editor. Standing in a noble order in a post which had been held by some of the true Sachems of the Congregational Christian tribe, Bill brought to the ancient publication a vigor of mind and imagination which made it more than ever the club magazine of our parish parsons. Many things could be said about the things he did, but the true measure of the appreciation felt by all of us is the fact that the paid subscription list of the Minister's Quarterly is at an all time high.

The occasion for his resignation does us all credit. He has left his pastorate in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, to become an Associate Editor of the Christian Century. We congratulate the Century. We congratulate Bill Hart. The Quarterly will bear his mark for some time to come.

A "Caretaker" Regime

For the immediate future the Quarterly will be published under the direction of a committee chaired by the Director of the Department of the Ministry. Of one thing we are reasonably certain. That is, that the Quarterly has proven its worth and will be continued. We are now engaged in negotiations which will decide just what its relationship to the Joint Commission on Church and Ministry of the General Synod of the United Church is to be. With cheers to the former Editor, deep thanks to his associates who are no longer able to continue to help, and confidence in the people new and old who will carry on, we solicit your patience in the belief that the Quarterly will go from strength to strength.

Manuscripts Wanted

It will be said often that the Minister's Quarterly is a magazine *of, by,* and *for* the parish clergy of our fellowship. We will sometimes ask for articles by people whose names are known by everyone when specific themes are to be discussed. But for the most part we trust our subscribers to send us the material we need. Please be concise. Do not send sermons (there are ample outlets for them in other journals). And do not be downcast if all you send is not printed. It is no reflection on the excellence of the material if it is rejected. We must be selective as to subject matter lest every issue be crammed with the fads of the day. The Quarterly is ours. May it be an anthology of our best thought in both doctrine and practice.

This Issue . . .

We have added a new department in this issue. It is the Quarterly Forum. In it we hope to print brief but telling opinions on subjects more or less controversial,—sort of a "letters to the editor" section in which our subscribers may correspond with one another for the benefit of all.

Of course, everything in this issue is good (we hope), but if you want our opinion as to what should be read first we would mention (*sotto voce*) the piece on preaching by Chaplain Glyn Jones and the article on worship by Mrs. Thompson.

THE QUARTERLY FORUM

In this new department in the QUARTERLY *we hope to give ministers a chance to "sound off" at the rest of us on their pet subjects. It is hoped that readers will respond to the sentiments expressed here, pro or con, or open new topics. Please be brief, terse, and to the point.*

THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

by JOHN R. CROWE*

HAVE YOU FOUND many people of the Church you serve, as well as the unchurched, befuddled in their understanding of the Church's work? Have you found them quickly by-passing areas of concern and work as if such matters had little or no relationship to the Church's essential purpose? Have you yourself ever been bothered by knowledge of the fact that you were ill prepared to answer clearly and sharply a question about the nature and task of the Church?

I know I have. And because I have, and because I want to be more helpful in leading Christians to be the Church they are called to be, I have written a list of functions which together make up, I believe, the total task of the Church. I offer the following list of functions to you through our QUARTERLY primarily for your comments, criticism and suggestions for improvement:

1. It is a function of the Church to *establish* itself. As we people and the states have the Constitution to establish us as the United States of America, we people of God have the Word and the Sacraments to establish us as the Church, —as a fellowship of transformed lives living together and seeking to live together in the covenant relationship of God's love.

2. It is a function of the Church to *equip* itself. For the Church continually to establish itself as a fellowship of transformed lives in covenant relationship with God, the Church will have to provide the best tools possible. Such tools w include: adequately trained leadershi opportunities for discussion, study, pra er and worship; well equipped classroo for the Church school; a meeting hou for public worship which appeals the logically, architecturally, and aesthetical

3. It is a function of the Church *express* itself, both as a corporate bo and as individual members. It is the sponsibility and joy of Christians to e press the transforming power of Go love in personal and group relationshi Wherever it is needed, Christians w want to demonstrate an unsolicited lo and to do the work of love in reconcil tion. The love of God will be manifest the efficient organization and effecti administration of the Church's progra and it will also find expression in t stewardship of time, talent, and treasu in the lives of individual Christians.

4. It is a function of the Church *extend* itself, doing so through the ec menical movement, through missions, ligious education, and evangelism, a through an indirect influence on soci and culture,—the arts, philosophy, the ogy, ethics, and politics.

5. It is a function of the Church *evaluate* or *examine* itself. It is importa for Christians to measure their individu and corporate lives against the plumb li of truth and righteousness which G places along side of our lives. They w want to know exactly where, when, a how their lives are not in right relatio ship to God in order to do somethi

*Mr. Crowe is minister in Harrison, Me.

about it. And in conjunction with the function of equipping itself, the Church will regularly want to evaluate what they have accomplished, where they are headed, and what steps need be taken to arrive at the desired destination.

These are the five functions which I think describe the total task of the Church. What do you think?

My purpose in writing these functions is to come up with a tool which will help me to present the nature of the Church and the Christian life to a Church membership class. Or a tool to use at a planning retreat of the Church. Or a tool for the dedication of members on Roll Call Sunday or Enlistment Sunday. To have such a tool, I have sought to keep the number of functions limited and yet all inclusive. Likewise I have worked for a list which is easily remembered and subject to recall.

Now the question is: is this list of functions adequate for such a job? Does it overlook important functions of the Church? Does it do an injustice to the nature of the Church? Is it misleading? What do you suggest?

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CHURCHMANSHIP

by RICHARD B. KOZELKA*

I TRUST THAT many of you have read Stephen Potter's little book of a few years ago entitled *Gamesmanship*. The sub-title told the point: "How to win games without actually cheating." Various techniques are suggested for giving your opponent the idea that, although he beat you, you are really the better player.

I am thinking of writing a similar book, to be called *Churchmanship*. The sub-title will be, "How to be a church member without actually doing anything." It will include the following suggestions:

Claim the church as "My Church" . . . but criticize it as if you have no personal responsibility for anything it does. This will give you the advantage of having a church (very fashionable these days), but will relieve you of working to improve it.

Agree to all of its programs and projects . . . but never support any of them by attending. This will encourage the deacons and the minister to work harder planning worthwhile activities—and that's what the church is for, isn't it?

Better still, agree to attend a church meeting . . . but do not actually show up. This keeps the leaders of the church awake nights worrying about you, which is probably good for their Christian concern.

When you have company over the weekend, do not offend them with the inhospitable suggestion that they come to church with you. And certainly do not take the position that you are going to church anyway. This might make them uncomfortable. They will surely appreciate the implication that they never go to church at home.

Speak often of the terrible shape the world is in, and how it needs a revival of spiritual values and faith in God . . . but pledge to the church only enough to keep a minimum program going. This will require the trustees to try to imitate the miracle of feeding the multitude with five loaves and two fish. (You might offer to go out Sunday mornings and try to provide the fish.)

Announce, "The church doesn't live up to my ideas about it" . . . but never tell the deacons what your ideas are. This will maintain your reputation as a

*Mr. Kozelka is minister in Sparta, Wis.

thoughtful person, and you can use the same ideas over again, since none is ever shared or tried.

Say to yourself, "I never get anything out of going to church." This throws the burden of Sunday worship back on the minister, who should certainly be able to solve your problems without any effort on your part. If you worship only occasionally, it will make him see to it that he speaks to your particular need every Sunday—in case you should be there.

When Lent begins, give up smoking . . . instead of giving up Sunday loafing or Wednesday evening TV fights. This will be a testimony of your sacrifice, and Easter will be especially significant as the day you can start smoking again.

LINGOIST PREFERRED

by FRED SMITH*

AS A LISTENING PREACHER (since I am what they call a 'retired minister') my preference in preachers is the lingoistical type as against the linguistical ones. In leaving the seminary at Yale many years ago I was greatly impressed by the parting counsel of the then famous Dean Charles R. Brown. He said: "Now that you are going out into the active ministry I counsel you to place upon your shelf, not to be read again, many of the books you have had to study while in the divinity school."

I soon learned what he meant and saw the wisdom of it. In the theological school one delves to the root of things. Emphasis is placed upon specialized study. One's outlook tends to become "scholarly': academic. All of which has a value. But if the language of the school displaces the language of the street, especially if that be Main Street on the far flung open spaces of America one soon finds a perplexing hiatus existing between the pulpit and the pew.

This does not mean that the diplomaed minister must for one minute look upon his people as a bunch of ignorant people. That would be to reveal him as one wise in his own conceits. The farmer; the rancher; the miner; and so on all have a wisdom of their own articulated to a lingo of their own. It is supremely important that the minister in whatever situation he is placed should come early to learn that lingo in such a way as to be able to transmute the findings of the schools into the understandable lingo of the common people.

TO ILLUSTRATE. I was paging that eminent work of our time called "The Interpreter's Bible." I would be reading along at a rapid pace when I would suddenly come up against a thought block. The writer in his scholarship had come to a height of wisdom which could only be glorified by what? The one supremely revealing phrase. Yes, just that, but it had to be given in Latin or Greek or German. And I, having had only a smattering of Greek and Latin, was nonplussed. I and the writer were mutually exclusive: he was a linguist; I was a lingoist. Life had been too short for either him or me to become both. It would be nice if all ministers could be both, but, as I hinted in my opening sentence, for serving the average congregation the minister had better be a lingoist.

I recall the phrase used to me by a fine country church minister. We had been listening to an expert who had come to us from afar. And, glory be, he had clicked where he might just have clacked. And why? The country church minister knew why as he said to me with enthusiasm in his voice: "That fellow talks our lingo." He knew the magic of the apposite word for the people in the school and also for the people on the street.

*Mr. Smith is a retired minister who lives in Laguna Beach, Calif.

THE MINISTER AND HIS CRAFT

"The changing role of the minister in our generation" has been a subject much with us lately. Members of theological faculties have written much both enlightening and provocative. The QUARTERLY *here offers, as its contribution to what has been called "the current fad of ministerial pulse taking," the thoughts of three parish ministers.*

THE MINISTER AS MISSIONARY

by GRAHAM R. HODGES*

SLOWLY IT IS BEING DINNED into our brains by our prophets that the church has no missionary program. It itself is a mission, the whole works, and not just a religious body with an appendage labelled "missionary interest."

More and more we see clearly that our mission is to America also. As there is no East nor West, no North or South, so there is no home or foreign.

Nor is there a cutting edge, an outer living section, a thin living frontier group which determines the quality of the whole. The effectiveness of the church as a mission is largely decided by the vitality of the whole. A few dynamic churches and pastors here and there, frequently mentioned in denominational journals, cannot bear the whole weight of mission. It is putting too great a burden on them.

If the church as a whole is a mission, then the local church is a mission station, however at home it may be.

What then of the minister?

He is no longer a pastor keeping watch over his flocks by night but a missionary, called, sent, and placed in such and such a mission field. So much of this element went into the "call" of many of us. But parish routine, like the repeated playing of a record, can soon deaden this call so we hear it no longer, or faintly.

Some call this era we live and work in "post Protestant." Others go farther and say "post Christian." But whatever the term we may all agree that the average Protestant clergyman works, lives, and breathes in a culture which bows more frequently to mammon than to God, and bows lower.

If the church is a mission and the minister, ergo, a missionary to a semi-pagan society filled with half Christianized and therefore semi-immunized pagans the whole program of the local church and the job of the minister must be rethought and reshuffled. The guns must be pointed in a different direction and at a different enemy. Sermon aims and content must be completely rethought and examined in the light of the indigenous missionary problems. Committee membership and even the existence of committees themselves must be looked at in a different light.

Instead of the trustees being the most important group with the finance committee a close second the Visiting Committee or Evangelism Committee, whichever you call it, takes top position. Perhaps the slow growth, or rather slow death, of many local churches may be traced to the preponderance of money and personnel we throw into our money raising departments, national, conference, and local, as contrasted with that put into evangelism.

BEING A MISSIONARY may set us apart more than we like. To men accustomed to "being one of the boys" even on a high level, with membership in Rotary and Kiwanis, leadership in this civic group and that, giving a church tone to secular

*Mr. Hodges is minister in Watertown, N. Y. and a frequent contributor to religious journals.

organizations, the idea of separateness appeals little. Being a part of things is a comfortable feeling. Being inside taking part is cozier than being outside looking in and that with a critical attitude. But a net result of being too much inside is a watered down Gospel and a dimmed view of the mission.

We must abandon the old picture of the parson as a status quo bulwark standing solidly at the center of a status quo "kirk" located on the green ringing out its melodic message in unmistakable tones. The parson may be asked to give the invocation, blessing, or benediction at the big civic banquets but rarely the main address.

Since he is no longer the "parson" in the old sense he might well be back at his old stand he never should have abandoned—as a missionary. This role involves a loneliness the important "parson" never experienced, a willingness to be thought queer which again the "parson's" role had no place for, even the penalty of being foolish. Parsons are never foolish but always wise, grave, and right.

WHEN THE MINISTER becomes a missionary his whole posture changes. And with his then his church's. This tiny bit of geography which bounds its immediate influence becomes a battle ground between good and evil, light and darkness, Christ and sin.

The prime concern ceases to be a larger budget. With new eyes the missionary church and its missionary pastor sees unchurched and unpreached-to families just around the block, scores of inactive members on the rolls, dozens of children not attending church school, teen age youth hanging around pool rooms on Sunday night, domestic tangles where attorneys and family guidance centers can't help but where God can.

Instead of presiding over a flock the minister leads in mobilizing a hard hitting group of believer-fighters. A loving but militant posture is taken on.

One writer on contemporary Lati America, where the population explosio is the world's loudest, commenting o the outstanding effectiveness of the Pente costal movement, examines the *why* c their rapid and solid growth:

"What then is the proper method? . . It is this: their effectiveness in mobilizin their entire membership in continuou propagation of their beliefs. The growt of each group is in direct proportion t its success in mobilizing its entire co stituency in continuous evangelistic actio This was, humanly speaking, the key t the success of the apostolic church—an it is the key to success today."

Place the minister at the hub of su an endeavor in the local church and y have defined the role he may have take if America is to be evangelized. D spite apparent success of liturgy, em tional appeals, and sectism nothing le than a church constantly at war is enoug Unless an organism is in constant fightin with its environment it cannot rema healthy. Accommodation means death.

Most of us operate in a totally differe setting from the traditional Protestant pa torate kept alive in movie, television, fi tion, and misty memory. Instead of t stable rural community with four gener tions of families listening in the fami pew we minister to an ever changi group whose whole world is shifti daily. Answers learned in seminary a out of date before the neophite past gets a decent chance to try them. Pasto techniques are like the new gadgets science: "If they work they're obsolete

But the missionary attitude is ne obsolete. The command "go ye" is ne fulfilled.

Is the minister a missionary or a cl per of coupons of a spiritual heritag Custodian or front line fighter? A m completely at home or a pilgrim? Ins tutional director or leader of a body m bilized for constant action?

"I stand beside you, all of us within the one Body of Christ."

THE MINISTER'S IMAGE OF HIMSELF AND HIS CONGREGATION*

by ALFRED G. H. SCHMALZ*

WHAT IS IT that makes a man a minister? What is it that has separated him out from among his fellows for this special status? When I think of myself as minister, what image do I have of myself?

There are, of course, many motives which play a part in the choice of vocation, for all men, certainly for those who become ministers. Many events have a decisive role, too. But for me the compelling factor was the pressure of a claim, of a demand. It came to me as the insistence that my life must count, must not be wasted, and must conform to a Will not my own which was pressing itself upon me.

Why me, and not many others? Why did I feel this pressure, and not you in this congregation? I do not know. However, I have never looked upon this claim as indicating any merit in myself, nor as differentiating me in my basic nature from other people.

What, then, is my image of myself? I do not claim any revelation of God that others do not also experience. I do not claim any special skills or capacities, denied to others. But I do feel strongly the sense of vocation. To the limit of my insight and capacity, allowing constantly for human failure and disobedience, I feel the necessity of witnessing to the fact of God and to His rightful claim upon every man to fulfill his life. I am committed to the belief that nothing has importance save as it fits within the intention of God for the world, as manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Perhaps you already say: this I accept for myself too; and how is the minister, then, different from me? My point is precisely that: I am not different from you, save in this one respect—for me Christian vocation is a life-work in a particular occupation to which all my time is given; I am a layman set apart to be, also, a minister.

But why me, and not others? This still puzzles me.

WHAT, NOW, IS MY IMAGE OF YOU, the congregation? How do I, as a minister, regard you?

This might be a field day, should I or any minister venture to say everything that has ever been in his mind or in his feelings about the congregation he serves. I have already stressed the minister's human-ness, which he shares with all men. Here his humanity is particularly evident. For there is no one, layman or minister, who has not felt aggrieved, hurt, let down, irritated. A minister has as much problem with his emotions, connected up with events unpleasant to him, as does anyone; and he has it no better, no worse. He too gets discouraged, suffers in defeat, is burdened by failings of others. You should not be surprised that this is so. But to all this I quickly add one very essential item: it is the intention, if not always realized, of the minister that there should be, in his relationship to every person he meets and knows, a fundamental reverence and respect for him as a person, not diminished by any emotional reactions that are painful.

Before I come to the fundamental relationship between minister and congregation, I want to dismiss two kinds of relationship which I hope do not exist between us. One is the employer-employe relationship. Technically the minister is employed by the congregation, but I do not think of myself as being "hired," and the fact that I receive a salary from you does not, I believe, make you think of yourselves as "employers." The other re-

*Written in observance of the 30th anniversary of Mr. Schmalz' ordination, and of the 20th year of his pastorate in Darien, Conn.

lationship, one I do not regard as part of my function, is that of reformer. I am not opposed to authority in the pulpit, and I believe that we must deal realistically with the fact of sin and the power of evil. But I do not think it to be the minister's function to hold a verbal whiplash over a congregation and to try to beat people into a certain mold of righteousness. As a minister, I do not believe in being authoritarian.

What, then, is my image of this congregation? I picture you as a company of people all of whom, despite other differences, have one thing in common: the desire to be Christian and to follow the Christian way of life, in obedience to God revealed in Christ. When I picture you in these terms, I include myself among you, sharing with you in the Body of Christ. I fill many roles, preacher, counselor, teacher, friend, and I cannot be to you just what any other person may be to you. But I stand beside you, all of us within the one Body of Christ.

I do not, thus, think of myself as being way out front, in a forward position to which I am trying to draw you. I do not think of myself as far ahead of you, dragging you, perhaps reluctantly, to where I am. This raised pulpit platform from which I preach does not, I hope, ever suggest, by how I use it, that I who stand upon it have a superiority of any sort over you. I think of ourselves always as a fellowship, people with a kindred hope, a kindred faith, a kindred conviction about life. We may get far in our common journey, we may fail to move; but whether we achieve or fail, we are together. We are a community of believers, bound together in our faith.

LET ME NOW make this relationship between minister and congregation somewhat more explicit, by three key words.

First, *pastor.* The word "minister" doesn't quite carry the meaning of pastor. Pastor means shepherd. Nowadays a congregation hardly think of themselves as a "flock," and certainly don't speak o themselves as "sheep;" yet the term "pa tor," meaning shepherd, is good, for means care and concern. A pastor, like doctor, responds on the instant to a ca for his services, or to any need whic he sees.

It has been being a pastor that has ha most meaning for me as your ministe Often a congregation thinks that the mi ister gets most personal satisfaction fro his preaching. There is often much sati faction in preaching. But the chief wo of the minister is done between Sunday and so between sermons, when he is wi his people and can be, in some way, th instrument of God's gracious overture.

All ministers share in such pastoral co cern. But an increasing number, like m self, have found a particular interest pastoral or, as is sometimes also describe as personal, counseling. I mean by th the scheduled hourly appointments in m study, carried forward over as many pe iods of counseling as may be require dealing with the endless variety of pro lems which cause distress and defeat. Th is not a psychiatric service. Few ministe have the qualifications in training for tha It is a counseling service, for which th minister normally does have both th background and the skill, growing o of his training. I find this to be an im portant, and a very rewarding, phase my ministry, because of the considerab healing that attends it.

The second key word is *preacher.* Wh is preaching? It is the presentation of t Word of God in terms relevant to huma experience, aimed at illuminating our li and changing it. Preaching is not t delivering of an address on an interesti topic; it is the attempt of the minister evoke the reality of God, compelling and in relationship to the experiences the people who constitute the congreg tion. Preaching doesn't always get off t ground. Nor does it always hit its targe But this is what it is meant to be: illumination of the Word of God, ma relevant to our human experience.

I have asked myself what changes have taken place in my preaching over these thirty years. What emphases made now were not so dominant earlier?

I find myself much more aware today of the enormous power of evil, and of the complications and confusions of our ethical life. Life seemed easier to change, in 1928, and preaching was thought to be a rather handy hammer to beat it into a new and adequate shape. This was the year of the Kellogg-Briand pact outlawing war. War, we thought, was done with. In the 1930's came the economic depression. Once again, we offered rather simple solutions, sure that if only people thought correctly and logically we could fashion the new society immediately. In short, we had an abounding optimism. All this has since crumpled under the burden of a second World War, the rise of communism, and the present widespread world disorders. Evil, we now see, has its roots deep in the fabric of our common life, and its conquest is going to be hard.

I find also that I am preaching more to persons, and less about social issues. I am no less concerned than earlier with the great social problems: war, poverty, racial conflict, civil rights. And I see, even more than before, that the pressures of our society are diminishing our opportunities to mature into adequate spiritual persons. But nevertheless I am directing myself more specifically than before to our situation of alienation, estrangement, meaninglessness, aloneness. I feel we need to see ourselves as persons, not as things; and it isn't just a matter of organizing people to crusade against evil, it is a matter of illuminating the meaning of life itself through faith.

I find that God has become more important. I mean in this sense only, that I do not now believe that man of himself has power to transform his life or his world. I once almost thought that. My early ministry said little about redemption, and did not take incarnation and atonement and reconciliation too meaningfully. I haven't lost faith in man. But I have discovered that only as man is empowered by God, through faith, will he be able to be himself and to re-order his world. We idolized man, we must keep him in his place as man, and worship only the Lord God.

Finally, I am making the Church more central in my preaching. In the earlier years of my ministry the Church was considered rather decadent and hopeless. As we made progress spiritually, it would be sloughed off and discarded. I have no such feeling now about the Church, despite its generally known failures and weaknesses. I see the Church now as the fellowship of Christians, as the peculiar place where God's probing Word is judging men and redeeming men. We need the Church. It is not true to say that there is no salvation outside the Church. But I am quite sure it is necessary to say that the redemption of mankind is going to be linked with the Church.

The third key word is *leader.*

The leadership role is easier to define in a monarchy or a dictatorship, where the leader is definitely an authoritarian person. It is he who makes the decisions. It is he who enforces decisions. He leads by command. But what is the role of the leader in a democracy? Here the people make the decisions. It is the people who enforce the decisions. How then does the leader lead, if at all?

The relationship between leader and people in a democratic organization like a Church is hard to define. It is true that the leader may not lead at all, but simply goes along with majority decision. He then is simply the voice of the people, reflecting a common denominator of belief and an average point of view. He asks for a show of hands, and then makes himself the executive of group thinking or acting.

I believe strongly in the capacity of people, in group life, to reach sound conclusions and to come to decisions that carry them forward. I respect this capacity in people. As the leader of this congregation I respect it. I have found, again and

again, that my own personal solution to a problem would have been wrong, had it not been checked with group thinking and refined by discussion. Democracy does work. But it works where there is leadership. A leadership which brings a new and challenging thought into consideration of a problem, which persuasively preaches the probing Word, which holds the group to a higher Will—this is essential. The leader must possess intuition, to know when to press hard, when to be patient. He must know when to speak, when to be silent. No one can lay down rules on this. Certainly he is not always consciously "leading," nor are people always thinking of him as their leader. But he is there, more than a chairman, more than a presiding officer, as one who keeps the group alertly aware of its own accepted goals.

The leader has two temptations. He may avoid the responsibility of leadership by simply seeking to discover group opinion. On the other hand he may not think of himself as involved in the life of the group whose leader he is, and may not see himself, with them, as all being led by the Spirit. Here is his necessary humility, that he should know himself as being led. Only so can he win acceptance by the group he hopes to lead, as all feel themselves closely held within the one Body of Christ.

A PASTORAL LITANY
(For 1959)

LORD, keep me busy, but not too engrossed
To spy the bluebird's wing above the wheat,
To make good work my gospel, dawn till dusk,
And then to play—with children round my feet;
Though calling daily through the spiraled dust,
To bless the birds and flowers I shall meet.

If led through city squares, weighed down with toil—
Eyes there to find the lover and his lass,
At sixty as at twenty, still to breathe
True benediction when their figures pass;
To own the splendor of late suns that blend
Our fading shadows beautiful in grass.

To cling tenacious to Your word of peace
Though war lords, for the moment, hold the stage;
In love and trust to move down friendly paths
Though crime and horror fill the printed page;
To sight beyond this choking gloom a world
To be that shall brief, futile tears assuage.

To know deep down within, where lies the soul—
This yet must be a blest, heroic age!

—PHILIP JEROME CLEVELAND*

*Mr. Cleveland is minister in Canterbury, Conn.

"Whatever the reason may be for the turn to religion it is imperative that the churches must offer more than social gimmicks, panaceas, and therapeutic talks."

CHANGING PATTERNS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY

by HAROLD C. BURDON*

CHANGE TAKES PLACE so slowly in the life of the church and ministry that we are apt to think nothing ever changes. Dr. Halford Luccock once gave voice to this belief in a parody on one of the great hymns:

"Like a mighty army moves the church of God,
Brothers we are treading where we always trod."

If, however, we are observant we know better. This came home to me one Sunday last winter when the daughter of a former minister returned to visit the church in Newington. She spoke of her father as she remembered him in the pulpit some sixty odd years before, a striking looking man, she said, with his iron grey beard and Prince Albert coat. Listening to her I was reminded that in the days of my boyhood the Prince Albert coat was the customary pulpit attire for a minister. By the time I began my ministry, however, the more modish form of dress was the morning coat, or cutaway. I never shall forget the first time I appeared in public dressed in this fashion. I was decidedly on the thin side in those days and, in consequence, looked more like an underfed beetle than a Christian minister. It is good to report that by the time the coat was outgrown a modified form of the scholastic gown originally adopted by the Reformers as the fitting dress for a minister of the gospel again had come into its own.

The altered appearance of the minister in the pulpit led me to think of other changes which have taken place over the years since I first became aware of churches and ministers. I do not recall, for example, ever having worshipped in a church with a chancel before beginning my theological education. Of course, I had seen the arrangement in Episcopal churches but since Episcopalians were only slightly less pagan than Roman Catholics not much in the way of enlightenment could be expected of them. In the churches that really counted, notably the Congregational churches, one never expected to see anything but the central pulpit. New churches which are being built today, however, almost without exception have the chancel arrangement. It undoubtedly will be many years before the central pulpit entirely disappears but the pattern of change apparently is well set. Indeed, so far as I know, no voice is being raised either in the churches or in the architectural world in favor of the retention of the central pulpit. One of the interesting things about the congregation I serve is that in all the discussions which now are going on about the new church we hope to build, it is taken for granted there will be a chancel rather than a central pulpit, —this despite the fact that the meeting house where people have gathered for worship for the past one hundred sixty-one years always has featured a central pulpit.

The pattern of change also is discernible in the emphasis now being given to worship. In former times one could go into a Congregational church almost anywhere and find pretty much the same order of service being used. Formal ritual, gowned choirs, processionals, recessionals, introits, prayer responses, litanies, chants, and the like were unheard of practices. Much of the service was regarded by preacher and congregation alike as a preliminary exercise leading up to the im-

*Mr. Burdon is minister in Newington, Conn. This paper was read at the Annual Meeting of the General Association of Connecticut in September, 1958.

portant event of the morning,—namely, the sermon. The celebration of the Lord's Supper was held at stated intervals and invariably followed the regular preaching service, being treated with casualness and sometimes with unseemly haste. The practice of following the calendar of the church year had not yet achieved common acceptance. Advent and Lent would pass by practically unnoticed, and the minister's mail was unencumbered by appeals to observe all the special Sundays of the year. Ministers exchanged pulpits with one another much more frequently and, perhaps, with good reason. The strain of trying to provide for all the spiritual needs of a congregation through the medium of a sermon must have been terrific. Preaching, of course, continues to be central in our churches but sermons are getting shorter. The dictum, "no souls are saved after the first twenty minutes," now is accepted as part of the gospel and ministers are giving much more careful attention to the service of worship, realizing that this, too, is a means of communicating God's grace quite as much as the spoken word.

The garb of a minister, the placement of a pulpit, the increasing use of ritual and the decreasing length of sermons are not the only changes which are taking place. Youth work, for instance, bears not even a slight resemblance to that of an earlier period. The Ladies Aid Society and other women's groups have been reorganized and streamlined and now are known as the Women's Fellowship. Men's Bible Classes are practically extinct and Men's Clubs, where they exist, are but feeble imitations of Rotary and Lions Clubs. The once powerful Prudential or Standing Committee of the church has given way to a myriad of committees and boards which seem to be less stodgy and a bit more far-sighted.

One of the more notable changes in the organizational life of the church is that which is occurring in the area of Christian education. Most churches in former times regarded the Sunday School as a separate organization,—not exactly an unloved step-child in the church home but certainly one left pretty much to its own devices. Related though it was, the church accepted no particular responsibility for it and sometimes actually disclaimed it. It had to develop its own organization, recruit and train teachers and leaders, evolve a working policy and raise the money for text books, supplies and equipment. Indeed, the attitude of many churches was that the Sunday School should be operated on such a profitable basis that it could make a sizable contribution to the church budget. The church in Newington, for instance, for many years actually solicited the Sunday School for an annual pledge. But now a new day has dawned! The name, Sunday School, has been discarded in favor of the more dignified and accurate designation, Church School. This by implication at least, places the responsibility for the educational program of the church where it belongs. Christian education is not one of the casual by-products of the church in action. It is one of its chief functions. Since tomorrow's spiritual leaders are likely to be the product of today's Church Schools, awakened churches are striving mightily to improve the quality of the educational program. Professional leaders are being recruited, curriculum content re-examined and a real effort made to provide first class religious instruction. Indeed, the day may be in the making when the quality of our church schools must match that of the public schools.

One of the more phenomenal changes in the pattern of church life is the heightened interest in religion. People are going to church and otherwise showing an interest in religion in a way which is astounding to one who began his ministry in the twenties. Many reasons are advanced to explain this interest. One is the growth in population although, in point of fact, many local churches and denominational bodies have experienced a

creases far beyond that which can be accounted for by such growth. The population of Newington has increased approximately 66% during the past decade but the membership of the church has increased by better than 70% and church attendance by 145%. (This, without a change in ministers, too!) Another reason given for this change is the development of fantastic nuclear weapons offering the prospect of another war so catastrophic that all mankind may be doomed. When men are in peril they are likely to think of eternal things. Hence, the return to religion. Still another explanation is that people are beginning to see the answer to their feeling of rootlessness in the teachings of the church. Industrial and technological advances have altered American habits and customs. People have acquired a purchasing power nearly equal to their desires and their preoccupation has been with the acquisition of material possessions rather than with the eternal verities. Yet after their possessions begin to match their desires they find life lacks the certainty for which they long. They want something more than the economic law which enthralls them. They yearn to live by the spirit. The church seems to offer them this possibility and they are turning to it in increasing numbers.

WHATEVER THE REASON may be for this turning to religion it is imperative that the churches must be prepared to offer them something more than a variety of social gimmicks, panaceas and therapeutic talks. A church may be so completely organized that it is able to offer some form of activity to every person from the cradle to the grave but of what value is it if the individual never is led to understand that the root of his difficulty lies in his alienation from God, the source of his being?

Changes in the cultural patterns of society also have had a profound effect upon the life of the churches. A secular outlook on life that places the chief emphasis on material things,—defining gracious living in terms of swimming pools, speed-boats and a general air of expensive luxuriousness,—has greatly affected the "other worldliness" of the churches. It is not an exaggeration to say that many a church today is more interested in a balanced budget than in the missionary enterprise. It generates more heat discussing the ethics of social drinking than it does warmth of understanding toward people of other races and religions. It is more concerned with the appearance and the expansion of the physical properties it possesses than it is with the question of man's salvation. It develops tremendous social programs which feed the body but do little to minister to the needs of man's spirit. It dabbles in medicine and arrogates to itself insights and powers it does not, in fact, possess. It not infrequently issues statements in the name of the Holy Spirit which reveal a woeful lack of an understanding of the heighth, depth and breadth of the love of God as we read it in the good Book. William H. Whyte, Jr., in *the Organization Man,* says of the church in suburbia, Park Forest, that the people felt it leaned too far toward the social and pragmatic. "One wife," he writes, "who was trying to explain to me why she didn't go to any church at all explained her feelings by referring to her child. 'My little girl made a shrewd comment,' she said. 'She has been telling me that she didn't want to go to the United Protestant Sunday School any more. I was asking her why. She told me, 'I don't want to learn about how Christian people live. I want to learn about God'." Mr. Whyte went on to say that while the remark of the child smelled of the parental lamp it also expresses rather succinctly the objection some people had to the program of the church there. I am persuaded this same feeling of uneasiness exists in many other quarters today. When we speak good humoredly, or a bit derisively, of a church as

having about it the atmosphere of a country club we are but giving voice in another way to our feelings of distress that it places the chief emphasis on the social and material aspects of its work. Certainly, the playing down, so to speak, of the spiritual side of man's being and the exalting of the doing of "what comes naturally" has had its effect upon the churches. In consequence, great changes have taken place in people's thinking about such matters as their relation to God, the proper use of Sunday, the reading and study of the Bible, the nature of one's obligation, personal and financial, to the church, and what it is which makes one Christian.

When we turn more specifically to the minister it must be said that significant changes have taken place in the pattern of his life. A casual examination of his work schedule reveals that the bulk of his day is devoted to administrative and organizational functions rather than to study in preparation for next Sunday's sermon. When he would like to be visiting the sick, the shut-in, the newcomer, he is tied up with a stream of callers or an endless round of committee meetings. He frequently finds his conception of his task in direct conflict with that held by his congregation. To them he is the preacher but he also is a counsellor, the executive head of an organization, the recruiting officer, a joiner of prestige groups, a drawing card. His task is further complicated by the roles in which secular society casts him. He is the churchman who may be called upon to perform various professional functions: the invocation at the high school graduation, the prayer at the Memorial Day service, the benediction at a dedication ceremony, the after dinner speaker who can be ready at a moment's notice. Paul Irion, in an article in *Theology and Life,* speaks of two other aspects of the attitude of secular society toward the minister. One is to regard him as a "holy man" who remains aloof from the main current of lif unaware of the evil there is in life. Th other is to look upon him as one wh performs certain functions because th is his job. He believes in brotherhood b cause he is a minister, not because he is Christian. He works to enlist people the fellowship of the body of Christ n in obedience to Christ's command but b cause in so doing his church will prosp and personal benefit will accrue to hi

Dr. Louis M. Hirshon, former Dean Christ Church Cathedral, Hartford, ar now President of Hobart College, in witty review of the history of the Ep copal Church from the mid-twenties the present, writes:[1]

> "The younger among us may have g ten the impression that we in th days were not as theologically matu nor as well educated nor as gener nor as generally concerned as to and in this they are right, but th were compensations and there w explanations. The church was m democratic in spirit and action . Clergy and laity alike could argue w bishops without a haunting guilty fe ing of *lese majesty* or its ecclesiasti equivalent. We didn't teach as mu as we should or in as many areas b we taught. We didn't sit around mousy resource people, we tried to d lighten in such things as the Bible, life of our Lord, the sacrame church history and doctrine. We did in our innocence, handle such thi as relationships, group dynamics, chotomies and bifurcations. We did know a frame of reference from frame-up. Perhaps we were in E without realizing it, but then Ad and Eve took the Garden of Eden granted, too."

This commentary on the changing c cumstances among Episcopal clergym reminds us that similar changes are taki place in Congregational circles. In fl mer times, a church called a man to its pastor, preacher and teacher. I

now, if one is to believe what he hears and reads, a church employs a minister to be its chief communicator, its public relations counsellor, its psychiatrist without portfolio. Indeed, so manifold are his duties that there is widespread feeling, voiced by the clergy chiefly but echoed, on occasion, by lay people as well that there is need to redefine the nature of the minister's role. H. Richard Niebuhr, in his book, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry,* quotes Professor Mark A. May as follows:

> "What is the function of the minister in the modern community? The answer is that it is undefined. The work of the lawyer, the physician, the teacher, the artist, the writer and the engineer is clear-cut and rather sharply defined, so that when a young man chooses one of these professions he has some idea of what he is getting into, but not so with the ministry. Entering the ministry is more like entering the army where one never knows where he will land or live, or what specific work he might be called upon to perform."

Gerald Jud, in his MINISTER'S QUARTERLY article, *Tea and Hostility,* has this to say about the minister's job:[3]

> "Now the local church, if she is to realize her true nature and fulfill her function, needs a leader and so the people go in search of one who will be an overseer, a preacher, an administrator of the rites and sacraments of the church, a teacher, a counsellor, an evangelist, a recruiter of new members, a visitor of the sick, an incessant caller in the homes of the people, a leader of the youth, a man skilled in public relations and a good family man."

COMMENTS SUCH AS THESE indicate the need for redefining what the minister's job is. It should be apparent to all how virtually impossible it is for a minister to be the parish jack-of-all-trades and a sociological, psychological and ecclesiastical superman at the same time. The minister, if he is wise, will center his activity on those tasks to which he is best suited and give up trying to be all things to all men. A man need not pose as an expert in the field of group dynamics, a specialist in the area of personal counselling, an authority on labor, racial and international relationships, or a resourceful resource leader in other realms of human interest and endeavor in order to be a good pastor. People will forgive his fumbling inexpertness in many areas of human knowledge if he is a good pastor, an acceptable preacher of the Word, and a good man, humble, sincere, honest and devout.

The confusion which exists in the minds of clergy and people alike regarding the nature of the minister's task inevitably create tensions. These exact a heavy toll on the efficiency and happiness of the minister in his chosen work. Strive as he may, he cannot be all things to all men. As a result, some men leave the ministry and others restlessly move on from church to church, hoping to find in each succeeding field of endeavor the Utopian situation which most certainly did not prevail in the previous pastorate. This does not mean, however, that, at last the minister's task has become a hopeless one. Rather it points in the direction of endeavoring to arrive at a better definition of what the minister's role is in the modern church. The minister, for his part, will see that his role is influenced by his own psychological needs. His personality, fears, resentments, moods, aggressions, or lack of them, all have a bearing on his ability to handle his job and the conflicts arising from it. As Paul Irion puts it:[4]

> "The solution (in the areas of conflict) lies with the pastor himself. It begins with self understanding, the honest knowing of one's self. It continues in a realistic confrontation of personal assets and liabilities. It seeks, from the past, knowledge of the origins of the feelings and motives that shape the present. It strives to help one become

a real self in the service of God."

The problem of intellectual honesty also complicates a minister's life. He may be called to be the pastor of a congregation which is much more conservative than he, or, at least, much more confused theologically than he and, therefore, much more dogmatic. The entire spectrum of religious thought, ranging all the way from a position approximating that of a Jehovah's Witness to a smugly complacent humanism may be represented in a single congregation. To be as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove is difficult in such circumstances. Moreover, this seems to be a time when a good part of human society seems convinced that security is found through authority. Such things as Fascism and Communism, or the enormous growth in federal power in the United States, are political examples of this. The thrust of the Roman Catholic Church to achieve a place of dominance in secular as well as religious affairs and the resurgence of the fundamentalist sects with their stress on the sole authority of the Bible as the literally inspired word of God are religious examples. Many people want to be told what they must believe about God, Christ, the Bible and the Church rather than to find convictions of their own. There seems to be some fear lest the "light and truth which yet may appear in God's word" will have an unsettling effect upon them. In consequence of this, they look with real envy at the fundamentalists and the narrowly orthodox groups which speak with such authority on all matters of faith and practice. They cannot see, or are unwilling to accept as fact, that a faith to be satisfying and enduring must be built on a sounder foundation than docile acquiescense to dogma. Reason, discernment, intelligence, wit, acumen, understanding, all the faculties of mind and spirit must be applied to the search for a faith by which men may live. The minister in this situation is not the dictator, nor does he presume to speak on matters of faith and doctrine ex cathedra. Theologically sound and competent though he may be his ro should not be that of a dogmatic author tarian but rather that of a goad to the u thinking, a hair shirt to the complacen a light to the ignorant and an inspire counsellor to those who seek the truth. H tries to make it clear to those to who he ministers that while one's religio faith may have begun with some vag feeling or simple teaching it is brough to full fruition through the exercise prayer and study, reason and intelligenc

Dr. Niebuhr, in the book previous referred to, suggests that both church and ministers need to recognize that t minister of today occupies a new ro For want of a better phrase, he calls hi a pastoral director.[5] The pastoral direct carries on all the traditional functions the minister, the preaching, leading worship, administration of the sacrament shepherding the flock, and presiding o the church. Many of his duties are ganized in special ways. His preaching directed toward the instruction, the p suasion, the counseling of persons w are becoming members of the body Christ and to carrying on the mission the church. He sees worship as somethi more than an accompaniment to preac ing. It is the effort of the church to de onstrate the love of God. Its activity as priesthood is to make intercession for men, offering thanks and praise on beha of all. Counseling, he thinks, has in vie not only man's need of being reconci to God but also the need of reconciliati with his fellows. It is counseling wh calls into service the assistance of ot agencies, something, I fear, which so of our amateur psychiatrists in the m istry do not always keep in mind. T Pastoral Director also is the teacher teachers, the head of all educational act ities which he leads as a competent Chr tian educator, "These," he writes, "a other less central activities of the minist of all periods are carried on by the P toral Director, but the work that lays t greatest claim to his time and thought the care of the church, the administrati

of a community directed toward the increase among men of the love of God and neighbor."

One who is not much of a theologian hesitates to venture into this field, but it is plainly apparent that a part of the changing pattern confronting the minister lies in the realm of theology. While making no claim to any competence in this area I suppose it may be said of any man who has graduated from a good seminary (and I did, the Hartford Theological Seminary!) that he is something of a theologian. He may fall far short of being an expert in the field but he undoubtedly is familiar with at least one system of theology and if he has been fortunate enough to sit at the feet of a really good theologian, he probably has been thoroughly innoculated against the possibility of ever becoming seriously infected by any other.

Liberal theology was in the ascendant during my student days and if any descriptive term may be applied to as foggy a theologian as I am it is the word liberal. Since in its main outline this liberalism is familiar I shall not attempt to define it in detail. It will suffice to say that it recognizes the Bible as the authority of the faith. While it abandons much of the traditional language of theology it never has become so free as to discard the concepts of historical Christianity. It endeavors, rather, to reinterpret them. It holds that all the resources of human knowledge and experience are to be utilized if the Christian faith is to be raised to higher and richer levels of thought and feeling. Liberalism maintains an open mind to new revelations of truth, feels free to use the discoveries of science and the insights of the poet, the seer, the thinker, in the development of faith. This liberal theology, according to common report, gradually is being replaced by neo-orthodoxy and, or, by a synthesis of the two. No effort will be made here to discuss this gradual change of theological pattern except to say that although the liberal cannot accept it at least he welcomes it. If faith is to be a growing thing then clearly it must subject itself to the searching examinations and the rigorous disciplines of all manner of theological thought. It well may be that the work of liberalism now is done and we have moved on into a new age of theology. I will confess, however, that I sometimes wonder if Morton Enslin, may not be right in declaring that . . .[8]

> "The liberal spirit is offended and repulsed at the reactionary trend of so much purported theology rampant today,—the arrogant and self-satisfied Roman Catholic Church with its rigid and uncompromising hatred of freedom and all which that entails; the fundamentalist with his vulgar and noisy championing of a book which he tends to make cheap and unlovely, if not suspect, by his own intolerance; the new wave of neo-orthodoxy which appears hardly more than a new crop of fundamentalists with faces washed, hair combed and dressed in evening clothes."

While it is true that liberalism often has wandered off into humanism and taken positions which have brought it into disrepute, the evangelical liberal holds that the gospel he has to preach is quite as valid as that of those who look down long and disapproving noses at him. He believes that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; that where man's orientation is toward God, he may employ his endowment of reason and imagination, his skill of hand and knowledge of mind not merely to gratify his desire for material possessions and personal power but for the glory of God. I am inclined to agree with John Thomas McNeil that while it is impossible for us to return to the Reformation we must keep it as our theological position to return to that to which the Reformers returned. "The power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith." This is the good news we have to preach.

THUS, WE COME to the end of this wandering tale of changing patterns in the life of the church and ministry. The minister today may dress differently, preach, or aspire to preach, in a church with a chancel and preside over a streamlined organization in a new edifice or one which has been rebuilt and refurbished. Called to be preacher, pastor and teacher the ill defined nature of his task may be such that he labors under tension and is haunted by the fear that much he does is futile. He never may know success as the world knows such. Indeed, the sum of his life may seem, in the eyes of his fellowmen, a record of defeat. But we who have heeded the call to serve the church know we are in the greatest business in the world. Regardless of what our attainments may be as pastors, preachers and teachers we know our work will not go unblessed if we are faithful and sincere, possessed of integrity of mind and spirit, putting our trust in God and endeavoring, according to the light which has been given to us, to preach His word and do His will. A minister need not be a great preacher, the wisest of counsellors, a shrewd administrator and the cleverest of teachers to be counted great in the service of his Master. If in the words of Micah, he does justly, loves mercy and walks humbly with his Lord the discernment and vision will be his to cope with the changing patterns on terms which do not compromise his understanding of the Christian gospel.

1—Louis M. Hirshon, *"The Gay 1920's and Since."* The Churchman, April, 1958, page 14.
2—H. Richard Niebuhr, *"The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry,"* page 51. Harper and Brothers, 1956.
3—Gerald Jud, *"Tea and Hostility."* MINISTER'S QUARTERLY, December, 1957, page 4.
4—Paul Irion, *"A Concern for Understanding the Role of the Minister."* Theology and Life, February, 1958, page 37.
5—Niebuhr, *op cit.*, page 83.
6—Morton Enslin, *"The Credo of an Unregenerate Liberal."* The Protestant Credo, The Philosophical Library, 1953, page 74.

UNMINISTERIAL MUSINGS

by MYLES D. BLANCHARD*

What is there about a bowling team that inspires more loyalty than a church?

* * * * * *

Do some parents think it is cheaper to send five cents along with their children for Sunday School than to hire a baby sitter for the same length of time?

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Why is it that the person who discards the theory of extra-sensory perception is the same person who wonders why the minister didn't call on his second cousin when he was in the hospital?

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How come the person who doesn't particularly enjoy the minister's sermons always objects when he is away and invites a substitute to fill the pulpit?

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Isn't it strange that sermons with social objectives are always acceptable to John Doe until he becomes the object?

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How many times Mrs. Smith has passed judgment on her minister for not "preaching the Bible" only to become offended when he finally took for his text, "Judge not that ye be not judged."

* * * * * *

Could it be possible that there is yet to be invented a new excuse for not teaching a Sunday School class?

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What is there about a bowling team that inspires more loyalty than a church, etc., etc., etc. . . . ."

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CONTENTS OF A NAVY SERMON

by CHAPLAIN GLYN JONES*

This piece is used by permission of the U. S. Navy publication in which it first appeared. It obviously applies to preaching to a regular congregation as much as it applies to preaching to Naval congregations.

ADDRESSING NAVY CHAPLAINS on "the content of a good Navy sermon and the mechanics . . . important in sermon construction" can easily expose one to presumption. The sermon is a matchless and formidable entity. Alone among literary forms it purports unvaryingly to express an ultimate reality. The essay is its own *raison d'etre,* but the sermon is always a means. It approaches the ineffable with poetic insight but insists on communicating the vision in prose. As imaginatively as fiction it ventures to think again the reflections of a divine intelligence.

Other kinds of literature seek to entertain, to enlighten, to persuade. The sermon may encompass all these purposes without deviating from a single-minded intention to evoke ultimate decision in every life which hears.

Content and mechanics are surely recognizable divisions in this creation, yet the sermon is not merely an object for formal analysis or a subject for construction by blueprint. It involves more than the imparting of information or the communication of ideas.

Preaching is the transfusion of vitality from one life into another. In the Judeo-Christian tradition the substance of that vitality is a life of the spirit, received from God, which occupies and informs a man's natural powers of intelligence, conscience, will and emotion.

The sermon is a vehicle for that life in its wholeness.

The "Content" of the Preacher

To discuss the content of the sermon, then, we must begin with the "content" of the preacher. It is that alone which distinguishes him from the essayist and the lecturer.

It is that which insures that he is not his own man but God's spokesman.

His task is to proclaim God's good news, to herald God's truth from the battlements. Before mounting his lofty coign he has presumably reduced his message to those final verities on which life itself is staked . . . The "content" of his life has become the content of his homily. An old Westerner seeking a minister for his congregation had this distinction clearly in mind. When he was asked what kind of clergyman would do, the old man answered, "A man big enough to reach heaven when he is on his knees."

The imperative mood of such a life is absent from much that passes for preaching in our day. Too frequently the pulpit dispenses options, reservations and qualifications.

This recurrent weakness of a venerable institution rises precisely whenever the sermon becomes stylized, when men concentrate on the "content and mechanics" of the vehicle to the exclusion of the life it should be conveying. We remember the changed tone of Jewish preaching in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. The synagogue teachers had long enjoyed the title "amoraim"—the speakers. Now they preferred to be known as "seboraim"—the holders of opinions. No longer did they proclaim "Thus saith the Lord." Instead they murmured timidly, "We think that such and such is the mind of God."

So the high priests of certain fashionable modern "ba'als" disdain the ancient word "sermon" in favor of the euphemism "address."

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No Tin Whistles

There is certainly a place for opinions in the pulpit, but its distinctive power lies elsewhere. It does no good to send a herald to the tower if he blows only a tin whistle. "Give me the benefit of your convictions if you have any," said Goethe, "but keep your doubts to yourself, for I have enough of my own." ". . . if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" Who indeed?

Let us be clear that preaching does involve preparing people "to the battle." If one pole of this transaction is the compulsion of a Godfilled life, the other is surely the dark and profound need in the depth of every listener. Here again we are sometimes led astray. We are tempted to minister to wants rather than to needs, to prescribe for symptoms rather than syndromes.

Men want "peace of mind" when they need wrestlings of the spirit. Men want catharsis when they need feelings of guilt. Men prefer masochism when they need ways to absolution. It is well to know doctrine and mechanics, but blessed is the preacher who probes beneath his peoples' wants to uncover their needs. If you are to teach Tommy Latin, you must certainly know Latin—but you must also know Tommy.

The Crucial Encounter

The crucial encounter of the sermon, then, takes place between the "content" of the preacher and the "content" of his hearer. If nothing happens in the confrontation, it does little good to diagnose the sermon. It is time to examine the preacher—the "content" of his life, his sympathetic outreach into the needs of other lives—for sermons are only the lengthened shadows of men.

More exactly it is time to ask why w are not winning men "to the battle. "The test of a preacher" (note: of preacher, not of a sermon), wrote Franc de Sales, "is that his congregation go away saying, not 'what a lovely sermon but 'I will do something'." That is ou test.

When we meet it our people will d something. The complacent will feel sti rings of a divine discontent. The ca loused will rise toward repentance. Th guilty will surrender to forgiveness.

All of us learned in seminary the ca pentry of the sermon—text, topic, se tence, outline—introduction, body, co clusion—build-up, climax, denouemen Technique is important in preaching as music, though it ministers best out sight. Nevertheless, mechanics are alwa a function of content.

It is conceivable that a bright biolog may one day be able to teach technique a chimpanzee, but no ape will ever prea a sermon. Amos and Bossuet and Phill Brooks inhabit a province forever pr served for the dealings of God with ma

In the sense in which we are speakin I don't suppose there is such a thing a "Navy sermon." There is only a spoke man for God confronting human bein whose needs are experienced in the co text of service life. We can say to th herald: "Know God—know Tommy don't get in the way!"

For the rest we had best mind t counsel that St. Bernard of Clairvaux o fered his fellow Cistercian preacher "If then you are wise, you will show you self rather as a reservoir than as a can . . . A canal spreads abroad water as receives it, but a reservoir waits until is filled before overflowing, and so com municates without loss to itself its supe abundant water."

GETTING OUR BEST YOUNG PEOPLE TO CONSIDER THE MINISTRY AS THEIR LIFEWORK

by WILLIAM A. LEATH*

What the Family Can Do

1. Provide an atmosphere of religious living. This includes at least some worship in the home, grace at meals, a discussion of religious truths from time to time, consideration of what goes on at church, and an intelligent interest in the church school program, with particular reference to the courses of study in which the children are engaged.

2. Regular church attendance along with attendance at church school programs, P.T.A. groups, class meetings, and the like.

3. See that children begin to take part in the youth groups the church provides. If the church does not provide such groups, find out why it doesn't, and see that suitable groups are established.

4. Encourage children to attend the summer camps or conferences now well established which start at elementary school level and continue through high school.

5. Be willing to serve on church boards and committees, so that children may become aware early in life that their parents are willing to take leadership in the church.

6. As children begin to discuss their life vocations, see to it that Christian life service, the ministry, religious education, and missionary service receive their proper consideration along with secular vocations.

What the Church Can Do

1. See that the church program all the way through is strong, creative and attractive. This involves constant study, not merely on the part of the minister, but on the part of everyone.

2. Have planning conferences to discuss the strength and the weakness of the church, and what needs to be done.

3. Provide as attractive and creative youth groups as possible, under the best leadership, lay or professional, available. Be content only with the best programs and techniques for dealing with young people.

4. Do not separate church programs too much from church school programs. Have many special Sundays when children and young people attend church and take part in services.

5. From time to time have high school young people share in the leadership of public worship. Some churches have Readers' Associations in which young people regularly read the Responsive Reading, or the Scriptures.

6. The minister, or ministers, should see that there is a fine rapport with young people. This makes it easy to confer with them about many things.

7. Although junior church members cannot vote, take straw votes on important matters, and get their point of view on various questions. Do not let them feel "left out," but make them aware that what they say and do counts. A good many churches elect junior deacons, and have a corps of junior ushers. These things help.

8. Make church vocations' conferences a regular part of the church program, and get leading men and women to take part in such conferences. Be sure that Christian life work has an attractive presentation, and have this done by lay people as well as by ministers.

9. Ministers and other religious leaders in the church should watch for every opportunity to discuss Christian life service, what it means, what its opportunities are.

Families and churches should be led to see that it is of great importance that more and better Christian ministers, directors, missionaries, etc. are recruited, that it is more important to secure such future leaders than it is to secure more and better trained scientists, engineers, and technicians. Also seek to make it clear that whatever one does, he should make the Christian faith the guiding lines for his life.

*Written by Mr. Leath for the Committee on the Ministry of the Congregational Union of Cleveland.

THE MINISTER AND THE DENOMINATION

Department Editor: RICHARD P. CARTER, 211 High Street, Suffield, Connecticut

In this issue we present two quite different appraisals of the unique witness of Congregationalism within the framework of Christendom. Needless to say, neither of them is "official." We shall be interested in comments from our readers as to their relative merits.

THE END OF AN ISM

"Just as Congregationalists we were never much of a success."
by **JOHN R. SCOTFORD***

ONE OF THE unheralded blessings which we will derive from the United Church of Christ is that our churches will be relieved of the need to propagate a nebulous something known as Congregationalism. We will no longer feel called upon to justify our existence as a denomination by picturing ourselves as different from other Christians. As a "sect" we have given a rather sorry account of ourselves. For this there are excellent reasons, in which we should rejoice.

The American denominations were founded on three bases.

Most religious groups start with *a distinctive teaching* of some sort. With the Baptists it was adult baptism, with the followers of Alexander Campbell the dream of Christian union. With the passage of the years this original deposit of truth gets whittled away and watered down. Something like this appears to be happening with even such a tightly riveted system of teaching as that of the Christian Scientists. Today the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are our prize examples of religious groups with distinctive systems of thought.

The plain truth is that the Congregational churches have never had a theology of their own. In Colonial days they were strongly Calvinistic. During the first thi of this century they veered towards li eralism. The present trend appears to toward a glorified adaptation of neo-o thodoxy—with the corners knocked o Those who would equate Congregationa ism with liberalism do not know the hi tory of the past nor are they wide familiar with the churches today. O theological genius is receptivity. We e cel other bodies in the agility with whi we can move from one position to a other. This can be rationalized by sayi that we have taken seriously John Robi son's words about new light breaki forth from God's Holy Word.

A common racial ancestry is the se ond basis for our denominations. O fathers came from overseas, and brou their ancestral gods with them. The Epi copalians speak with an English acce The Presbyterians can blame their st bornness on the Scotch. The strength the Evangelical and Reformed Chur and of the various branches of Luthera ism lies in their racial inheritance. F them the church glorifies their fo fathers.

Inevitably these ties of blood are thi ning out. This process has been at wo on our churches for a longer period th with other groups. For much of the nin teenth century the sons and daughters New England carried into the weste

*Mr. Scotford, a consultant on church architecture, is a former editor of ADVANCE.

states both a distinctive church life and a zeal in establishing colleges. Little of this has carried over into the present century. There is much truth in the description of Congregationalism in certain areas as "a spiritual success but a biological failure." Too often the enterprising Yankees who exploited the economic possibilities of the West failed to propagate themselves either physically or religiously.

A third basis for a denomination is *a form of organization.* This has been achieved in a colorful and imaginative way by the Episcopalians. Much of the strength of Presbyterianism is due to the distribution of power among many people. This also makes it difficult for them to modify their system so as to merge with anyone else. Through effective organization the lowly Methodists have risen to first place among American denominations.

In the past much has been made of "The Congregational Way" in contrast to these more closely-knit systems of church government. Some of our leaders tried to picture this as our "distinctive contribution" to American Protestantism, but without much success. It is difficult to get people excited about the way you run a church. Without saying much about it, the Baptists, Disciples, and Unitarians follow our same "way." It has been observed with much truth that every denomination which has ventured into New England has been "corrupted by Congregationalism." We have no patent on the self-governing church.

THE UNVARNISHED TRUTH is that we have never been able to work up much denominational zeal after the pattern of the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists. We have never had a "congregational Zion" towards which to march. As an Ism we have been a failure. And some of us are glad of it!

Yet we do have a genius, and a "contribution" to make to American Protestantism. This does not lie in our peculiar ideas, our racial ancestry, nor our form of organization but in our ability to adapt ourselves to varying circumstances.

The Pilgrim Fathers found themselves on the edge of a vast wilderness and a long way from home. In England they had been ecclesiastical anarchists opposing the existing Establishment. In the new world they established self-governing, self-propagating churches and provided for themselves an educated ministry. That which they wrought has stood test of over three centuries.

The westward surge of settlement which followed the Revolution created a new situation and many fresh problems. The churches met the responsibility and the opportunity by creating missionary societies to minister to the people of the new states and, at a later date, to the emancipated slaves in the South. This is a noble story which has never been fully told. One of the by-products was an awakened denominational consciousness. Our churches joined themselves together to do a job rather than to set up an ecclesiastical organization.

In recent years the problems of our churches have been internal rather than geographical. As life becomes more complicated the demands upon the local congregation have increased. A church can no longer do its job "all by itself." It needs both good counsel and an increasing variety of specialized services. Our churches have met this situation by the development of the state conferences as service agencies for the local congregation. We have found effective ways of helping one another. There is reason to believe that we have done more of a pioneering job in this area than has commonly been recognized.

Realistically speaking, what have we today? A group of churches without either a clearly defined common belief or a common ancestry organized primarily on a practical basis for getting done the things which churches ought to do. Such distinction as we may have is due to our easy adaptability to changing circumstances.

Two factors have made possible the establishment of the United Church of Christ. Circumstances which we will not explore have given the Evangelical and Reformed Church a real dedication to the cause of Christian unity plus an unusual degree of fluidity in their denominational arrangements. History has given the Congregational Christian churches a tradition of adaptation to changing conditions.

Viewed from this angle, the Union is not a negation of our past but a fulfillment of it. Just as Congregationalists we were never much of a success. Trying to be a denomination like other sectarian bodies has never been our forte. Probably the best thing about the new name is that there is no way that it can be twisted into a denominational label. Instead of being an Ist, we will be members of the United Church of Christ. If a shorter designation is needed, we can be simply "churchmen." In this new capacity we will be rid of some excess baggage, at least in verbiage, but at the same time we will be free to follow our true genius which is to apply our energies to whatever needs the churches may find before them.

LINES FOR THE DEDICATION OF HATHAWAY HOUSE
The Ceremony of The Fire

"KNEEL always when you light a fire,"
Thus runs the ancient rhyme;
Yes,—on your knees, ye men of God
For then your hearts are cleansed
By fires from God's refining Love
Through graciousness sublime.

"Kneel always when you light a fire;"
You, who have come to know
The sacred hour of thankful prayer
For hearts warmed up to God.
Upon our knees, we humbly ask,
This fire, God,—please bestow.

The charm and loveliness of home
May parsonages share;
Yet may a special warmth be found
Where now we offer prayer;
The warmth of Christian fellowship
By all who enter there.

So, kneel we shall, and pray God send
This fire to all our homes,
Ablaze indeed in this church home,
Yet strangely warm in all;
A fire that runs from hearth to hearth
To warm each heart that roams.

—AUSTIN W. GUILD*

*This poem was written by Mr. Guild for the dedication of a new parsonage in Somersworth, N. H.

THE CONGREGATIONAL WAY: HOW DOES IT ANSWER TODAY'S NEEDS?

by LAWRENCE L. GRUMMAN*

MY CONVICTION IS that by our very nature, by being churches that follow the Congregational Way, we are enabled to meet the most pressing needs of people today. Despite the theology one subscribes to, quite apart from the liturgy followed in one's church, the very essence of Congregationalism speaks to our condition. Since this may not be immediately apparent, let me point up four necessities placed on men by our times—then let us see how our church is prepared to deal with them.

1. MEN NEED TO SHARE IN MAKING SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS.

In our day of massive industrial and political organization, most people make few decisions that affect the group they belong to. And even though we are often led to believe we contribute to a decision, we vote or speak out in the way we are *expected* to. This thwarts our imagination and our creativity, leaving us frustrated and ineffective in our secular life.

In contrast to this, the Congregational Church is in the hands of the people. Here all decisions are made at home—that's the essence of our organizational pattern. Every member has a voice in affairs of importance. This has its dangers, of course, but the church takes the calculated risk of putting itself into the hands of its members.

2. MEN NEED STRONG FRIENDSHIPS BASED ON GENUINE SHARINGS OF HOPE AND FAITH.

The "lonely crowd" of our time is a collection of individuals isolated from each other in almost every important way. In our workaday world, "contacts" have replaced friends. In our social life, acquaintances substitute for friends.

Now, a church in which we are all responsible for each other and each other's faith recalls us to the creative depths of friendship. For here we sustain one another or the church ceases to exist. The church was made for friendship.

3. MEN NEED TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING NOT BECAUSE THEY MUST BUT BECAUSE THEY MAY.

In business men are forced into beliefs through logic or through experience. Elsewhere we are forced to believe whatever is expedient. But it is different in our church, for there are no strings attached to one's belief.

In our church, no creed is required. There is no force here, no formula. The church's role is to *inspire,* not *require.* To be sure, the church encourages Christian decisions, but the Christian is the one who decides!

Our beliefs that count are those fashioned within our own experience. Other beliefs, growing from a lock-step with some dogma, will fail. The Congregational Way embodies the necessity of each member's formulating his own belief.

4. MEN NEED TO BE IN A COMMUNITY OF GRACE AND FORGIVENESS.

The Christian church at its best acts in this way. But the Congregational Church holds a special sense of destiny here. For its members are acutely aware that all of us make grave mistakes. Furthermore, we recognize in ourselves the guilt over our global armaments race, our inter-racial antagonisms, our international uneasiness. Seeing ourselves in such a plight, we know intuitively that others too must find a way of being restored to fellowship which soothes and heals. And this our Church offers to us and to all.

There are other needs, peculiar to our time, that our churches help to overcome. But at least these four are persistent threats to man's maturing into a child of God. And the church, our Congregational Church, is in a position to meet these needs with great resourcefulness. What an opportunity is ours to answer today's needs!

*Mr. Grumman is minister in Fairport, N. Y.

THE MINISTER AND THEOLOGY

Dept. Editor: RAYMOND E. GIBSON, South Congregational Church, Pittsfield, Ma

A SURVEY OF THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION GROUPS

by RAYMOND E. GIBSON

The article below is a summary of returns from a request asking ministers who have discussion groups to share their experience and assess their value. For future issues, the department editor would like to receive short articles on theological themes. How about some articles on the theological problems inherent in the Papal suggestion of a world ecumenical conference? Light now, not heat!

IN THE LAST ISSUE of the MINISTER'S QUARTERLY, a request was made for reports on theological discussion groups in our churches. How are they organized? What material is discussed? Are they successful? If the replies have indicated anything, it is a wealth of diversity in each regard. No two are organized in the same way, and no duplication appeared in material read or discussed. What is consistent among the groups is the feeling that the groups are important, that they are still tentatively feeling their way, and that the enthusiasm of the laity is high.

Following are five representative groups, describing both organization and content:

(1) IN A CHURCH in New England a group was organized following a discussion at a deacons' meeting. The deacons were trying to decide what was their proper work and service in the church. The minister asked, "What do you mean by the church?" After fifteen minutes of discussion they decided they didn't know. They formed a study group involving the six deacons and their wives. They used Bright's *The Kingdom of God* as their text, met in each other's homes monthly. In this same church, a family camp experience stimulated a number of the younger couples who had not been church members for long to request similar discussion groups. Three groups of four couples each, selected generally on the geographical neighborhood in which they lived, were established and have been existence for over a year. One group us Robert Brown's *The Bible Speaks to Y* for study and discussion. The ot two groups used Guptill's *Christian Does Make Sense.* The groups met each other's homes once a month fr 7:30, closing at 9:30 with light freshments. A maximum of six coup per group has been agreed upon. both cases no churchwide publicity promotion was given the groups. T books read were used as points of parture. "Participants," reports the p tor, "assume that all members are equa and almost totally ignorant of theolo This relieves a lot of shyness. Many co fessions and questions about apparen simple religious questions are offer Discussion is consistently good, the p ticipants enthusiastic." The groups ha no formal organization, presidents chairmen. Though they like the minis to attend, they carry on when he can make the meeting.

(2) THE SECOND REPORT describe mid-Western church with three grou composed of couples of a variety of a who meet once a month for a two-ho session. The groups began with a g acquainted meeting at which they plored their interests and concerns. Th decided upon a series with single me ings devoted to such themes as "T Meaning of Life," "What is the Christ Faith?", "Christian Faith and Mode

Culture." Some themes emerged which took extended treatment. Among those listed were "What is Christian Love?", "What is the Will of God?", "What is the Purpose of Suffering?". For these the minister prepared a series of questions to be used as the basis for discussion, these being mailed to members well in advance of the meeting. After the pattern of continuing themes developed, the groups used Trueblood's *Alternative to Futility,* Kelly's *Testament of Devotion,* and Ferre's *The Sun and the Umbrella.* Groups were limited to ten couples, a time-limit of two hours set for meetings. The pastor comments, however, "Couples went home, stayed up into the early hours, and then carried on their discussion for days afterward with others inside and outside the groups."

(3) ANOTHER REPORT from New England describes a group made up from members of the community at large, representing a number of churches. The group has neither name nor organization but is referred to simply as "The Group." Its members come from five different churches and represent many shades of convictions and beliefs. The attendance is almost always by couples; their occupations include medicine, education, industrial work, and government service. Meetings are held monthly, October through June, from 8:00 until not later than midnight. The group averages six couples. The pastor writes, "During the first year our discussions were based on Hordern's *Laymen's Guide to Protestant Theology,* taking a chapter at a session. As the members of the group became better acquainted, the discussion was entered into more freely. Participants were able to express their opinions and doubts and convictions. Hordern's book served as an excellent springboard, his exposition being both lucid and thought-provoking. We found ourselves arguing both with the author and the theological viewpoints he represents as well as having general probing discussions among ourselves based on the ideas in the book." During the present year, this group has outlined a series of discussion themes on "The Concept of God," "The Divinity of Jesus," "Hell and the Devil," and "Christian Ethics in Today's World." Preparatory reading is suggested, much of it biblical. For the three concluding sessions this year the group plans to invite guest discussion leaders representing various facets of the religious and theological spectrum: a Jewish rabbi, an Episcopalian rector, and an Evangelical pastor. In organization this group began by appointing discussion leaders for each meeting who prepared a precis of the material to be discussed. Though occasionally successful, the pastor notes that sometimes the preparation and analysis were weak and gave the meeting a slow start. At present, the group launches into conversation without preamble. The minister is always present as a resource person. The group meets in the minister's home, begins with social conversation, goes on to the subject of the evening—concluding at about 11:00 or 11:30—and then moves to the dining room to stand up for coffee and cookies or simple refreshments. The minister notes that the group is enthusiastic, and feels that the value has been both specific and cumulative. Attendance has been faithful, even for couples travelling for miles through miserable winter weather.

(4) THE FOURTH, a Southern church, has two discussion groups: one of sixteen people made up of couples only, the other a general group with couples and individuals. Materials used include Kee's *Making Ethical Decisions,* Weatherhead's *Will of God,* and Phillips' *Your God is Too Small.* A chapter a month is read and discussed. There are no lectures, although the minister may make a 10-15 minute presentation to state the problem or occasionally share the leadership with others. Response is good, the group enthusiastic.

(5) A FIFTH CHURCH reporting from New England has had a discussion group for two years. Meetings are held weekly from October to May, with breaks at holiday seasons. The group has no formal

organization and is conducted in the "Great Books" seminar fashion. Attendance has ranged from sixteen to thirty-two, with an average of twenty. Subject matter has included Augustine's *Confessions,* Luther's *Treatise on Christian Liberty,* Dante's *The Divine Comedy,* and *The Dialogues of Plato.* Reading is done at home. The group meets from 8:00-10:00 at the church, includes a few non-church members (some Roman Catholic, some Jewish), and has refreshments only at the concluding session of any given series. The Dante series took twelve weeks; the Augustine, ten. Report from this church is enthusiastic and the pastor comments here too that the result has been cumulative. "It takes," he says, "quite some time to establish openness and the capacity for communication. After one year of working in the classics, the group read very quickly two of the Laymen's Theological Library volumes and decided to go back to the classics." This group exists in a church which has a highly developed program of Bible study groups which meet in homes. There has been little duplication in personnel both are intensively programmed a would require too much reading time double participation. The pastor of t church is firmly committed to reading classics and has expressed fear that "sell our laymen short" in underestim ing their ability to read, consider, a understand things theological.

IN SUMMARY, we may note the extre divergence in organization and conte Groups meet once a week, or monthly, clude church members only or commun participation. Reading varies from sin meetings on a subject to a year spent o book. Material read runs the gamut fr "guides to theology" to the classics theology. In every case the person repo ing suggested that the experience, ho ever faltering and uncertain in its inc tion, has proved of value out of all p portion to the energy used or the ti spent. Could it be that such groups these will help provide a frame or str ture of meaning on which to hang amorphous thing called "the return religion"?

A CONGREGATIONALIST LOOKS AT WORSHIP

by ELINOR BUNN THOMPSON*

I

THE GREAT STUMBLING BLOCK between the Congregationalist and liturgical worship seems to be his emphasis upon his independence, his insistence upon "free" worship. It is debatable how much one may be allowed to generalize from personal experience, but there seems to me to be a telling analogy betwen my changing attitude as an individual and Protestantism's attitude. The most cherished honor which came to me as a college student was being chosen the "most original" senior at Wellesley. This was the culmination of my basic approach to life. Born into a family of six children, in a town where my grandparents were among the "patriarchs," where relatives were in abundance, and where one's identity and pattern of behavior were set by family tradition, the role of "ugly duckling" was my instinctive choice. There was, in my mind, no line which could be drawn between unity and uniformity; established tradition left no room for freedom of spirit. The experience of others had no validity for me. When I read of Amy Lowell's young girl pacing in the formal garden, in her stiff brocades, and out of despair, anger, and rebellion crying, "Christ, what are patterns for?", I had the answer. Patterns were for breaking.

The rebellion, the iconoclasm, the egotism, the isolation—all the untempered characteristics of my youth, I had not then the grace to recognize. It takes time to see through surface routine to the meaning of the pattern. It takes maturity, I suppose, and the stability of a blended self-acceptance and self-respect to see ourselves as "typical," to feel our kinship with brothers and sisters and all mankind. These thoughts have been stirring my mind as I have concerned myself with the problems of worship in my church. I have known my own restlessness, my own dissatisfactions and hungers, and have come to know that they are not unique. My husband and I, dissatisfied with the superficialities of conventional suburban conversation, took the risk of speaking of concerns beyond the latest market reports, the newest hi-fi gadget, and the current political crisis. We discovered a new world of human relationships, a world to which our own reticence had previously barred the way. Many others were in the same boat with us, searching for the same port, and given the chance, were glad to admit to their passsengership! At our deepest level, in a new humility, we have outgrown our singularity; we know, instead, our oneness. A common answer, or at least, a common approach will do for us!

Now it is true that this is personal experience, but it has implications for Protestant worship. Protestantism was young once, too, and quite as ready as I to toss out the family heirlooms. In its sharp reaction against Rome, Protestantism exhibited the proud characteristics of youth: rebellion which became iconoclasm, freedom which disclaimed authority, self-sufficiency which spurned tradition. "Freedom," says Paul Scherer, "does not concern itself primarily with the things *from which* you wish to be free; its primary business is with the things *for which* you wish to be free." Protestant 'free' churches have not understood this; they have reacted from something, not acted for something. In fact, the accusation has been made that "Protestants have so long been accustomed to react mechanically against everything redolent of the Vatican

*Mrs. Thompson is a member of the Village Church in Wellesley, Mass., and serves as Executive Secretary of the Harvard Divinity School Alumni Association.

that if the Roman Catholics talked enough about God, many Protestants would be tempted to turn atheist in order to prove the purity of their principles." This is immaturity, more unfortunate in a church than in an individual. The time has come for the Protestant churches to show the growth which will enable them to meet the deep hunger of their people, many of whom do not know they hunger. It is true for the churches as for the individual—they will find themselves to the degree that they realize themselves as members one of another and as the Body of Christ, a Christ whose whole life was turned toward God.

II

THERE ARE INDEED encouraging signs that as Protestants we have now reached the stage of self-criticism. We are becoming aware that nothing important seems to happen in our churches. On Sunday mornings, people plod mechanically through nondescript and fragmented services, suffering the "preliminaries" to get to the sermon, hoping for a bit of positive thinking to carry them through the week. This bothers us, for we have an uneasy feeling that the congregation should leave the church, not buoyed up by ministerial encouragements, but "in the tremendous conviction that it is in the overshadowing presence of the living God who, in the confusing pattern of history, is forging his purposes to final victory."[1] Uncomfortable and humbling as it is, at last we admit to our spiritual insufficiency and question our vaunted freedom.

Some of my fellow church members hear the call to worship and fail to experience in their worship any deep sense of reality, comparable to the Catholic's sense of the real Presence of God in the Mass. This is what the worshiper most desires—a sense of God; as Von Ogden Vogt expresses it, the worshiper wants to pass through "a door of leaving-behind, that he may have release from manifoldness and confusion, cares and sin perplexities, fatigues, and affairs. He d sires to find solution and integrity, whol ness and strength, a vision of the i effable and the divine."[2] But he does nc and he is tragically frustrated. W aware of the magnitude of our proble and its roots, and realizing that its sol tion will not be achieved in ten ea steps, I would like to suggest seve areas where new understanding is nee ed, if Protestant worship is to take rightful place of primary significance a become determinative of all else in Chr tian living.

III

PROTESTANTS NEED A new understa ing of what worship is and of what it not. Worship is not something which can take or leave. It is the wherewit to live. I am sure this would come a surprise to many of my Protestant frie who view worship in various ways, not as an essential to life. Worship, example, is highly regarded as a super sort of psychotherapy, a ministry to t needs of individuals, an acknowledged a to mental health, social serenity, and ev material success. More condescending worship is looked upon as a sentimen self-indulgence, an escape from the ha realities of life, and its practice deno that one admits to a certain anemia character. Then, again, worship is a spectable formalism, a social cust which all the best people endorse. makes a good impression, sets a go example for the children, gives one sense of having done the proper thi Even among those truly concerned w worship, there are misconceptions a partial understandings of its true nat and function. Worship is not a matter individual piety, of retreat and medi tion; at least, Christian worship is n Perhaps it would help if we more f quently marked the differentiation tween personal devotion and corpor worship.

The dimension which is most often missed in Protestant worship is the dimension of the "Holy." In our apprehension of God, there should be the ambivalent structure of dread and love, what Otto calls the "mysterium tremendum" and the "mysterium fascinans": the awesome, fearful, belittling sense of impotence over against the attraction of love, grace, and mercy. Jacob knew that God "had been in this place" because he experienced two things. First, a sense of wonder and thanksgiving at the revelation of God's mercy. But then, an overwhelming awe: "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." After reading these words, one is almost ashamed to call the average Protestant church, even during worship service, the House of God.

Mystery is not all of worship, but it is the beginning of worship. Christianity from the first has united two elements: the historical and the mystical. It has alternated during the centuries in emphasis on one or the other: convictions concerning the life and works of Jesus, and an inner awareness of God through him. At the center of Christian worship is the Cross with its unceasing demand for facing all the facts of life, including the worst. Through worship at its best and deepest, "the conscience is quickened by the holiness of God, the mind is fed by the truth of God, the imagination is purged by the beauty of God, the heart is opened to the love of God, and the will is devoted to the purpose of God."[3]

Protestants need a new understanding of worship, so that when they go to church they will not go to get something or to hear something, but to bring something, themselves, their lives, into the presence of God, there to make sacrifice and there to accept the sacrament.

IV

PROTESTANTS NEED A new understanding of certain words. The interpretation of words is a never ending task for any person in modern society. Words should be treated *as words,* but they seldom are. Because they are such a powerful instrument, we have in many ways a superstitious awe of them, rather than an understanding of them. We permit words to act as barriers between us and reality, instead of as guides to reality.

When I suggest that Protestants need a new understanding of certain words, I'm thinking of words such as ritual, liturgy, symbol, sacrament, myth. Take 'symbol' or 'symbolism,' for example. It is almost impossible to instigate an objective discussion about these two words, let alone trying to discuss them as "concepts"! The symbolist becomes an idolater; the anti-symbolist an iconoclast. It is difficult to establish the validity of symbolic language; it is condemned as a retrogression from mature thinking in the search for truth; all will admit that it is less exact than cognitive thinking, but few will say it is more adequate. This is a serious disability of our age. Tillich thinks it is crucial: society must have symbolic structure or disintegrate.

Protestants must learn that it is the conceptions, not the things that symbols directly 'mean.' By means of analogical symbol, man brings order and proportion into his experience and gains a vision of a world which is not chaotic and insecure but which possesses stabilities and regularities which make an ordered existence possible. Modern man, though living in constant relationship to machines and technical devices and uniform structures, may yet through his life in the church regain health and sanity by being exposed to the traditional symbolic influences which have nourished the deep inward experiences of humanity—if he does not continue to refuse "symbolism!"

In worship as in no other realm, man's dependence on the symbol is inevitable. For here he seeks to express the inexpressible, here he seeks to describe the indescribable. "It is arguable," said Evelyn Underhill, "that every approach of the conditioned mind to the Absolute God

must take place by symbolic means." With the compulsion of worship upon us, we must accept our limitations and use, with gratitude, our "symbol-forming" power.

Man in worship and in seeking communion with God draws close to his fellowman and for this reason, the symbol in worship is indispensable. It makes it possible for men to worship together and to communicate to each other, as well as to God, their apprehension of the manifestation of God and their response of love and praise. The value of the symbol for religion is in its suggestive quality, its capacity to comprehend an almost infinite variety of meanings and relationships, and at the same time, in its cohesive quality, its meaningful center which gives shape and pattern to our belief and conduct. Ceremonial movements, sounds, and verbal formulas when ordered in a religious ritual create a framework within which corporate religious action can take place, uniting the worshiping group. The ritual also utilizes the general tendency of living creatures to repeat their actions and re-experience the accompanying emotions, so that psychologically it reawakens religious attitudes which can be shared by all taking part.

At the sacramental level, symbols do more than point to the Holy, they become bearers of the Holy, they "convey the numinous" and establish a relationship between human and Divine which always leaves the situation different from what it was before: the water of Baptism cleanses, the bread and wine strengthen and sustain the spirit. In the sacrament, the action is from God to man, not man to God, and God draws near to man in and through the natural.

Congregational-Christian churches have not commonly made use of symbols in their worship. But in the *Book of Worship for Free Churches,* the first such prepared officially within this group, (1948) there is discussion of "symbolism in worship" which calls to mind the constant use of symbols in daily life and justifies their value in worship. This is an e couraging development in the approa to worship on the part of the "fre churches. Perhaps we have found that are just as free to use symbols, as reject them!

V

Protestants need a new understan ing of the Church. We cannot understa Christian worship without understandi the Church—first of all, a community faith, the Christian faith. Paul tells "we who are many are one body, becau there is one loaf" and we all partake the same loaf. This has implications the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which we shall speak later, but it a founds the *koinonia* on Christ. This n understanding of the Church as the Bo of Christ is necessary for Protestants two reasons.

First, Protestants usually think on 'local church' level. We lose much wh we fail to grasp the idea of the univers Church as an existing fact, the Chur militant, the Church imperfect, yet livi from age to age by the common catho universal faith in God's saving work Christ and through the Holy Spirit. Th understanding of the Church can not he but widen our perspective in worshi In the life of the Church, its sacramen its liturgies, and its mystic insights, the is experience which we may share. Pr testants should not be afraid of accept the disciplines of corporate tradition.

Secondly, Protestants need to reali that authentic Christian worship must corporate worship. The congregatio that aggregate of individuals which ga ers together hoping their individual nee will be more or less satisfied by the ge eral pattern of the service, must become *church,* a community conscious of its f lowship in Christ. Our worship h moved too exclusively on an individu level: one recommendation recently giv by the Pastoral Supply Committee to t church in suggesting a new minister w that he "had the knack of making ea

member think he was preaching to him personally!" What we need in our worship services is less consciousness of ourselves "personally." Corporate worship is creative of the Church, it lifts people above the sense of their individuality, above the sense of their membership in a mere society for the propagation of religious principles, and makes them aware of their place in the one abiding community, one which is knit together in one communion and fellowship in the love of God. In such a community, Eternity is present.

To go to church is to go to corporate worship. This makes the priesthood of all believers a very real thing; every member of the Body of Christ, lay or clerical, should participate in the total priestly act of worship. This does not mean that personal devotion is not important, nor is it a call from individual freedom of thought to a closed system. It is the conviction that in the Christian scheme of things, the needs of the individual are met in community, that our common life is redeemed by Christ, and that our worship should be a symbol of our unity created by the Holy Spirit, a unity which links us not only with other Christians throughout the world today, but with all those who have gone before us.

VI

PROTESTANTS NEED A new understanding of liturgy. If the liturgy is the expression in worship of the life of the church, we need more understanding of the forms of this common worship. Liturgy does not, as is often commonly supposed, have something to do with candles, elaborate clerical vestments, divided or single chancels, except as these things may be *used* in the liturgy; they do not constitute the liturgy. Nor is liturgy any less "spiritual" or acceptable to God because it is formal, and not "free." Neither is liturgy just an "external act" having no power to move the individual to a sense of worship. On the contrary, a familiar liturgical element, when rightly conducted, releases the mind for worship and gives greater vitality to the non-liturgical elements in the service. It is capable of increasing the religion of a congregation that is accustomed to it, for forms of worship are "vehicles of truth, vessels of communication, and channels of deliverance."[4] In other words, the liturgy can be creative of the church.

The use of liturgy in our worship militates against the awful passivity which is so deadening to any sense of corporate worship and so destructive to any sense of communion. Liturgy is "the work of the people" and the expression, therefore, of the priesthood of all believers; it is the appropriate instrument of Protestant worship and should not be scorned as "high church" or "Roman." It was in order to make the liturgy more truly the work of the people that Luther 'reformed' the Roman Mass; he used German in Communion to make it more real to the people, he introduced the hymn as a statement of belief, and the sermon as the Sacrament of the Word; the principle of freedom led him to develop a non-eucharistic service, but not to throw the liturgy out of the sanctuary as some suppose. Wesley never intended the gathering of his people for preaching, fellowship, and prayer to be a substitute for the corporate worship of the church; he assumed worshipers would also take part in the liturgical worship of their churches.[5] As the *Book of Worship for Free Churches* now declares, different forms and usage may without offense be allowed "providing the Substance of the Faith be kept entire."

Protestants need not feel, then, that the only worship "in spirit and in truth" is spontaneous, individual meditation of the soul. Protestants should realize that the spirit needs form in which to work, the true spirit of worship cannot live on generalities, even though they be spiritual. The spirit gives life to the letter, it does

not work *in vacuo* (even a child feels that love, for example, must be conveyed through form—even if that 'form' be only a grubby bunch of tired dandelions!).

Protestants, in this connection, should understand anew their heritage. One Protestant minister reported that a parishioner asked him what happened between the end of the Books of Acts and the landing of the Pilgrims. Perhaps this is an extreme example of the American Protestant's sense of being cut off from the great history of the Christian Church, but it is indicative of a serious lack which makes for narrow and unfruitful worship experiences. We spoke of this in discussing the need for a vision of the Church universal and the Church eternal. We need a few Protestant Naboths who will defy the Ahabs of their own making and say, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

Actually, our use of hymns should point out the incongruity of much of our thinking concerning the great prayers, litanies, and creeds of other churches and ages. There is catholicity in all our hymnals. Does the average Protestant balk at singing "Faith of our Fathers" because it is a Catholic hymn, or "Lead Kindly Light" because written by John Henry Newman, or "Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts" because a monk first expressed the words? Luther's "A Mighty Fortress," Wesley's "Love Divine All Love Excelling," and the Quaker Whittier's "Dear Lord and Father of All Mankind" are found in the same hymnal. The "Gloria Patrie" and the Doxologies need no passport to our free church services.

It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the specific ways in which the liturgy may be used to revitalize our worship services, but perhaps it would be permissible to mention briefly certain aspects of our service which need re-appraisal. First of all, the Pastoral Prayer, the ex tempore prayer which is so often defined as "extemporaneous" in the sense of unprepared! We must be reminded of the value of a common language *common prayer,* which should direct personal prayer, but also lift us out of selfish and proud isolation to ackno edge our togetherness in life, in sin suffering, in joy and hope and in the l of God. Second, the Sermon—this sho be a liturgical opportunity; it should a vital and integral part of the serv Through the years, the Protestant emp sis on the importance of the sermon corrupted the main purpose of Chris worship and led to the centrality of minister, making Protestant worship most a "one-man show." "To make sincerity and effectiveness of public w ship dependent on the frail talents of human being is to condemn most chu goers to mediocre worship experien Thirdly, the Offering: it should be n less a means of gathering of money more a matter of self-dedication. great Oblation was once the central of the liturgy. Protestants should be ta the symbolism of the offering, and continue to regard it as a necessary m to paying for the church fuel and pos stamps! And, finally, the plan of our w ship through the year would benefit b recovery of the use of the ecclesiast year. Many Protestant churches are c again celebrating the Lenten Season revitalize the congregation's experie of Easter. By the use of the Church Y we gain not only a sense of conun with the age-long history of the Chris faith, but extend our contacts with Church universal. It is wonderful w all the churches of the community celebrating Whitsunday together, for ample, each in its own way, perhaps, all witnessing to the common faith in gift of the Holy Spirit through J Christ on that long ago day of Pente

VII

THIS PAPER WOULD NOT be comp unless it stated as its most important c clusion: Protestants need a new un standing of the Sacraments of the Chu

All Christian worship is basically sacramental; it moves in two worlds at once, making the church truly a "meeting-house," a sacred place—"the gate of Heaven," in Jacob's phrase, where the community of the Redeemed meets its Redeemer. Holy Communion is the abiding reality with which we ought to be primarily concerned in our worship.

There are two forms in which the Lord gave himself, in the Word and in the Sacrament, and therefore our worship must not neglect one form for the other. Our communion must consist not only in hearing the Word and making answer, but in receiving the offered life in the Lord's Supper and in offering our own. Holy Communion is the form of corporate worship instituted by Christ in circumstances of unusual solemnity and became the normal form of Christian worship on Sundays, as well as frequently on week-days for the Early Church. (Acts, Paul, Apostolic Fathers testify to this.) It is God-centered worship and corporate worship, that of the entire congregation uniting in one act, each individual sharing as a member of the Body of Christ and as an individual approaching God. Holy Communion is not a sort of memorial service, *mere* symbolism. Protestants need to recover the conviction of the first Christians; they were convinced that they experienced the Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament—they didn't argue about it or theorize about it, but they just simply took it for granted that when the mystery of Holy Communion was celebrated, He was there, communicating himself to the communicants. If Protestants could recover this faith, their worship would recover the dimension it so sadly lacks: the dimension of 'the Holy.' Could one take the bread and wine casually, without fear and trembling, without suffering as Isaiah did the terrible revelation of his own unworthiness, if one thought that by so doing he was entering into communion with Jesus Christ?

Something similar might be said in regard to Baptism. Protestants need to be taught the doctrine of baptism, they need to know what baptism means, or else they are so confused or unimpressed by what happens in baptism that they are quite unconcerned over how the sacrament is celebrated. Indeed it is doubtful if many of us regard baptism as a *sacrament,* an act of God in the Church. We need a new appreciation of the significance of Baptism and its relevance for the life of the Church. "Baptism . . . involves the rejection of one totality and acceptance of another. It puts the individual beyond the possibility of compromise. He has died to the old in order to embrace the new." Baptism should mark the great divide between the world and the church, (Rom. 6:1-11); what it usually does for Protestants is give the child a "Christian name" and is so little associated with the church that it can be administered privately in the home!

But Baptism is essential to the church and what takes place in baptism is to be described first of all in terms of God's purpose and activity. It is what Paul Minear calls "a pivotal episode in the tremendous drama of salvation, a climactic moment in the tragic and redemptive saga, as a sign by which the church points to its central mystery."[1] The average Protestant associates the baptism with a tender Jesus calling the little children to come unto him, not with a Jesus recognizing from the moment of his own baptism the necessity of death. When Jesus spoke of the baptism which he had still to undergo, he was speaking of his acceptance of a great obligation and yet also of his anticipation of the coming victory. Barth emphasizes that the church must rededicate itself to the one task of preparing for the return of the Lord, that in administering baptism, it must manifest itself as a true Church, wholly concerned with Christ's mysterious judgment on itself, and be renewed by the very Spirit which it invokes on the baptized.

Concurrent with the Liturgical Movement, there is manifest increased interest in the sacraments of the Church, and the

Spirit is stirring Christendom to a new understanding and a new *expectancy*. It is our prayer that Protestants will find the openness, the freedom in the true sense, to examine every specific doctrine and practice on its own merits: not is it Catholic or is it Protestant, but is it *Christian?*

VIII

As a final suggestion, I would say that Protestants need a new understanding of the relation of work and worship. We have said that worship is not divorced from life, but embedded in the reality of life. To worship God in the church is not a substitute for the service of God in daily life; nor is such service a substitute for worship; the two are bound up together. As illuminating an example as I can find to illustrate my meaning would be found in the Iona Community where George MacLeod's liturgical principle is the sacramental meaning of life and work. At Iona, there is a morning worship service of about twenty minutes, but to this service there is no benediction. Worship is held again at 9 P.M. but at this service there is no call to worship. In other words, a normal Presbyterian worship service has been cut in half, begun in the early morning before the day's work is started and concluded with a benediction only at the end of the day, thus encompassing within the act of worship, the work of the whole day which is offered to God equally with praise and prayer.

Protestants would enrich their worship services if they similarly could bring the things of daily life into the light of Eternity. Worship should be the bringing of all life, including the life of toil and trouble, into the Presence of God, so that all life may be redeemed. Worship is not a retreat from the world, but an enlarging experience, true worship is not complete without the creative purpose of renewed participation in the practical life of the world: it flows forth in witness and work.

1—Hagemann: *"The Liturgical Revival"* in Theology Today, VI, #4
2—Von Ogden Vogt: *Modern Worship,* New Haven, 1927. p. 48
3—James B. Pratt: *Eternal Values in Religion.*
4—Vogt, *op cit.* p. 22.
5—John Bishop: *Methodist Worship in Relation to Free Church Service,* London, 1950
6—Chad Walsh: *"The Reform of Protestant Worship"*
7—Paul Minear: *"The Mystery of Baptism."*

Fathers and Brethren:

To wear clerics or not to wear them? That is the question for many a young minister. Sometimes it is a question magnified all out of proportion and given an importance more than its worth. Often it is decided by arguments that are either trivial or irrelevant. But it is a question most ministers have dealt with at some time, and I'd like to broach it with you.

First, we must admit that it's here to stay. Just as God has so ordered his Church that there are prophetic and priestly branches, He seems content that there shall be no branch where both emphases are not present at least to some degree. I was interested to note that as we wended our way two by two up Euclid Avenue in Cleveland to the meeting of the Uniting General Synod the proportion of neckties, hoods, Geneva bands, stoles, and clerical collars seemed about the same on the E. & R. side of the column as on the C.C. side. We are a communion in which the majority of pastors wear neckties and scholars' gowns, but in which a sturdy minority also wear the accounterments that have been symbols of ordination down through the years.

I would like to make a plea for tolerance and common sense, tolerance in giving the other fellow the benefit of the doubt in assessing his motives, common sense in being sure one's own motives will stand scrutiny when the light of theology is turned on.

We are a communion between the extremes. The oft repeated "just another layman" theory, if carried to its logical conclusion, makes ordination of no significance. Yet, we are sure that whatever difference ordination makes is one of task and mission, not one of favoritism in the eyes of God.

Men who wear neckties in the pulpit are often sure that the only purpose of a clerical collar is to solicit special advantages from tradesmen and officers of the law. Men who wear clerics are likely to counter that those who do not are seeking the camouflage of mufti so as to be able to behave like "one of the boys" without incurring the special sanctions which society applies to the man of God.

There is enough truth in both these allegations to keep them current. But there are better reasons than these, and whichever choice we make it ought to be for better reasons.

Necktie proponents emphasize the fact that the pastoral authority should depend on a quality of spirit alone. They want no temptation to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, to erect no barrier between themselves and the laity.

On the other hand, a member of the Chaplains Corps of the Royal Canadian Air Force who wears clerics in the pulpit says this by way of explanation, "When I'm on duty as an officer of Her Majesty's Air Force I wear the appropriate uniform. When I'm on duty as an ordained officer of Christ's Church I also wear the uniform indicated." This custom is as old as the ephod of the Old Testament.

A good friend who is a Secretary on the staff of the National Council of Churches spends most of his time in administrative work. This frustrates his pastoral urge to be "for men to Godward." So he wears a clerical collar, and as he travels about the country on planes and trains he has dozens of opportunities to render pastoral counselling which he would not have if it were not immediately apparent that he is a minister.

It may be difficult to appreciate one another at this point. For example, if an ex-chaplain wants to wear his Army stole in his civilian pulpit I don't mind, but when he adds his decorations, complete with good conduct ribbon, to the ensemble I confess to a certain sense of bewilderment.

The short paragraphs beginning on page xxii of A Book of Worship contain some basic information none should be without. In this, as in all things optional, probably our best rule is a homely one. Let us agree to differ and resolve to love.

Fraternally yours,

Nathanael M. Guptill

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